

GRADUATION 2003

Photos by Jason Whiton '83

If you haven't guessed by now, the theme of this issue is graduation. We don't work for badges or honors at The Putney School, but we do celebrate the passing of one more class into the greater world every June. The cover design is the result of a conversation between your editor and recently-appointed Director of Development Doug Gortner that went roughly like this:

"Here's what our diplomas look like."

"Wow! They're beautiful. You should put one on the cover of the Post."

"I can't. How would I pick one?"

Fortunately, there were exactly 50 diplomas this year which, we discovered after a moment of inspiration, fit perfectly on both covers. For greater detail, see these and earlier diplomas on our website at www.putneyschool.org/academic/diplomas/diplomas.html.



Diplomas in hand, Natsuko Seto and Noah Kaufman share a well-earned relaxed moment.

PUTNEY'S 68TH GRADUATION ceremony on June 7 took place, thanks to wet weather, in the KDU. It was a bittersweet occasion as we bid adieu the tradition of being uncomfortably cramped and unable to hear the speakers for the new, considerably larger, acoustically superior auditorium experience the Michael S. Currier Center will offer this coming June.

After greetings from Director Brian Morgan and Chair of the Board Elizabeth Eisold Blaylock '80, the gathering was treated to a chorus and orchestra rendition of "The Road Not Taken," from *Frostiana*—Robert Frost's words put to music by Randall Thompson.

The commencement address followed. The American Civil Rights Movement had its share of memorable contributors—among them the late C.B. King (for whom the Albany, Georgia, federal courthouse was recently named), whose TV-broadcast beating by a policeman during a test of federally mandated desegregation laws helped galvanize the Albany Movement. But what about the heroes you've never heard of? The ones who

went, virtually unnoticed, about the daily business of making this world a better place for the disadvantaged? Carol King is one such person. With great skill, some luck and a lot of perseverance, Carol helped scores of poor children of every "race, color and creed" get a leg up in life through the Albany Georgia Nursery School, Harambee Project and the Harambee Child Development Center while husband C.B. fought injustice in the courts and on the streets. Carol delivered her address in a friendly, homespun manner that could make you feel as if she was talking to you over tea at the kitchen table. But the power in her message, a transcription of which follows, is unmistakable.

Before the senior speakers (whose addresses follow Carol's) and presentation of the diplomas, Masataka "Taka" Odaka '03 played a jazz piano interlude entitled "Three Views of a Secret," by Jaco Pastorius, and the senior singers performed a favorite, "Bright Morning Stars," from the Sing book.

So here's to Putney graduates everywhere. May there be many, many more.



Clockwise from top:
The Putney School chorus
and orchestra performing
“The Road Not Taken.”

Jillian Brelsford and Leah
McGowan sing “Bright
Morning Stars” with the
senior singers.

Masataka “Taka” Odaka
tinkling the ivories on
“Three Views of a Secret.”

James Tarmy, Wesley
Creigh and Elizabeth
Abelow whooping it up.

COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS

Carol King: *Educator, Activist, Putney Mom*

I JUST HAD TO TELL YOU a little of what I happened to say to Leyna as we walked up here on this patio that has the bricks. I remember coming and—please understand it hurt me each time I left a child up here—I wasn’t sure they were safe. But one time I came and I hunted and I hunted—it must have been when Leland was graduating—and I couldn’t find my beloved Peggy. You understand when you have four boys and one girl, that one girl is always going to be special. I found her finally. It was a light rainy day, as it is today, and she was down on her knees on that patio, laying brick for some classmate who had that as his project. Peggy had promised him she would help him complete it. And so, I looked forward to seeing her dressed attractively as many of you young ladies are. And I had spent hours making the dress. The parents were here and I, of course, wanted to show off my young lady. She disappeared

again and I waited. Finally I went into one of the dormitories and she was there with Sophie, who’s standing beside her now, and I said, ‘Peggy why aren’t you coming? All of the parents are out here.’ And she looked at me and she said, ‘Mom, if I come I’m not going to wear any shoes.’ She knew that wasn’t appropriate for her as far as I was concerned.

But now, going back to my roots. My roots really are in Cambridge. My mother was born in Cambridge. And we were brought up to be proper. Peggy wouldn’t have fit in. But, in any case, I’m sure my mother has turned over many times when you think in terms of how I left Cleveland, Ohio and married a southerner and went to the Deep South to make my home. When mom met him, before she passed away, she didn’t trust him. And so I was very conscious of that. She never gave him a cup of coffee. She never gave him a cup of tea. She

said he belongs to somebody, somewhere. He went to a black—in that time we called it “colored”—undergraduate school. And he must have had a young woman waiting for him. And, you know, mothers are always right. He did, ultimately, have one waiting for him. I’m glad mom wasn’t around when I found out.

C.B. let it be known that he intended to finish Case Western Reserve School of Law and return to Georgia. And, of course, I had no intention of going to Georgia. So each time he brought it up, I talked about other things, excused myself, and finally he said, ‘if the magnitude of the risk outweighs the utility of the conduct, then don’t do it.’ And by the time I figured out what he was talking about, our date was set and we moved to Albany, Georgia. That’s as far south as you can get without going into Florida.

I think so much of Carmelita Hinton and the job that she did at this institution because, similarly, though not literally, I did the same thing in Albany, Georgia. Going there that first year, not working, I had an opportunity to look at the people. I’m talking about poverty. I saw poverty that you would not believe existed. I was homesick for Cleveland. But I was determined to stick it out because my husband had said he was not going to practice law in Cleveland. He was going back to Georgia to serve his people. And I felt that I should do the same beside him. So we started a school. We called it the Albany Georgia Nursery School.

There were no nursery schools, no kindergartens—public or private—in Georgia. And here I was with a degree in kindergarten primary education and experience working in some of the better schools in Cleveland, including the Jewish Children’s Bureau School. Now here I am in south Georgia. What do I do? I went into public education and was doing first and second grade. The children came and then they disappeared. And then they’d come a couple of more days and they disappeared. I thought that they didn’t like me and that’s why they didn’t come.

Then I spoke to another teacher. ‘My children are not here. Where are they?’ And she told me.

‘They’re on the plantation. That’s where they live.’ And on the days that their mothers have to shake peanuts, shuck cotton, pick cotton and all of those other tasks that take place on southern plantations, the children are the baby sitters. They stay home with the young ones. The six-, seven-, and eight-year-olds are the baby sitters. I knew then that those children would never get an education unless we did something about it. And they would be in the same plight as their mothers and fathers—mothers who lived in the city taking care of middle-class white babies for five dollars a week—living in what John Lewis called, if you’ve read any of John Lewis’ books, shot-gun houses. You went up to the front door and you could see all the way through that house and out the back.

A friend of mine, who was active in the civil rights struggle, came with her friend, who was also active in the civil rights struggle—only in the field of law—to work with C.B. and get some experience. She knew about my early childhood background and we decided that we would start a private school. And we would call it the Albany Georgia Nursery School. Now we didn’t have any money. And certainly our husbands didn’t have any money. So what we did was we wrote letters to authors of education books and asked them to send contributions. And they did. We had about twelve thousand dollars. (I’m telling you this, young people, because you need to take some of these ideas when you want to do something, and do it.) We had the parents come and paint the building, an Episcopal parsonage. We had fathers to deal with the electrical wiring and the plumbing. They could do it because they worked for the white operators. They didn’t get paid, but they worked nonetheless. And they had skills.

Albany Georgia Nursery School opened in 1965. We were to serve fifteen children. But I decided that we could serve more. So we took on the school system and we served ninety children there. And the next year we served five hundred children. The amount of money coming from the federal government for these children and families was \$8,475. That’s a lot of money when you’re poor. I left the project five



years ago. The amount of money now is \$2.6 million that comes into the Albany Georgia Nursery School and the Harambee Project.

We shared our successes (with education and poor families) with the Chinese shortly after the president opened up China for travel. And we were the first group of educators to go there. Peking, Su Chow, Nan King, Tien Sien and Shanghai were the cities that we studied. And we carried the film of the Albany Georgia Nursery School and the Harambee Child Development Center. And they showed us what they were doing in terms of education with their children. But we also shared with East Africa; Nairobi, Kenya; West Africa (Yarma); Sydney, Australia and London, England. To all of these places we took the message of what we were doing with children and families. We said to the federal government there should be more. These families' children are entitled to the best education that there is. C.B., my late husband, sued the school system of Albany and Dougherty County eight times. It took eight lawsuits to provide children with the kind of quality education that they should have. But he did more than that. He sued the city for employment opportunities because what good is it to get a good education if you can't get decent employment? So, when he finished, the chief of police was black, the fire chief was black, the city manager was black and the water, gas and lights person was black. All of the opportunities for decent employment that would allow one to live in decent housing and provide a family with the kind of education that is being offered here [at Putney], that employment was made open to people of color.

When I think in terms of 1965 to 1997, the number of years that we worked to help parents and children—well, as I said to my daughter not long ago, 'Peggy, I'm glad that I spent my time doing what I did for people.'

Thank you so much. I hope I've challenged you—that you'll get out there and look at those who are less fortunate and take your talent and help them along the way.

Congratulations and have a good year.



SENIOR SPEAKERS

Melissa Leo:

The Permanence of Moments

ACCORDING TO KURT VONNEGUT, it's silly for people to cry at a graduation—much like it's silly for people to cry at a funeral. As Kurt Vonnegut says, "all moments, past, present and future, always have existed, always will exist. All moments are permanent; it's just an illusion people have that one moment follows another one, like beads on a string, and that once a moment is gone it is gone forever."

We may be moving on, as we perceive time, but we are not leaving all this behind us. Every moment that we experienced during our education at The Putney School will always continue to exist, as it always has. Even if those moments don't exist in a tangible way, they are a part of us. They will always be a part of us now. Those moments have brought us to this moment, and they won't fall out of our lives like so much dust. Besides, when has a moment ever existed in a tangible way?

Life is a funny thing, and time, as we all know it, goes on. Maybe we'll all begin to experience time differently, or maybe only some of us will. Either way, the moments we have passed through are here, they're fixed and they aren't going anywhere. One would hope that those times are ones that we would like to go back to—that we regard with fondness and approval. One would expect that this moment, in particular, is one that we would visit often if we knew how.

College Enrollment List and Life After Putney for the Class of 2003

Alfred University
Beloit College (2)
Boston University
Brown University
(Program of Liberal Medical Education)
Clark University
Cornell University (2)
Earlham College (2)
Eugene Lang College/
Mannes School of Music
double degree program
Florida State
Honors College
Fort Lewis College
George Washington
University, Elliot School
of International Affairs
Hamilton College
Hampshire College (4)
Macalester College (2)
Marlboro College
Mount Holyoke College
Naropa College
Oberlin College
Prescott College
Reed College (2)
Rhode Island
School of Design
Sarah Lawrence
College (2)

In any case, since crying at a graduation would be a silly thing to do, we might as well all laugh. Today is a day of celebration. Every day is a day of celebration, a celebration of life and living and the questions we all have that may just have to hang unanswered.

But today, in particular, is a day to celebrate. It's a more specific celebration, one that zooms in on an occasion in our lives. It's one that represents change, independence and a completion of a more structured part of our lives.

I'm proud to be celebrating this day with all of you. I'm glad you make up so many of the moments that have shaped me, and I am honored to have made up many of yours as well. I can only hope that those moments we have not yet perceived hold many of you in them as well. *Thank You.*



Keith Mackler: *Learning to Love Learning*

CLASS OF 2003, what a long, strange trip it's been. Some of you have been here with me since the beginning. Some of you are just starting your own journey and can't possibly understand how much I want to go home after this, dive, almost violently, into the couch and watch re-runs of Mr. Show.

When I visited Putney for the first time in 1998, I had no intention of attending or even applying. After several emotionally damaging years at a private, artsy and supposedly liberal

elementary school, I was immediately suspicious of any institution whose philosophy was based on self-discovery and personal achievement. My heart was set on a larger and, what I thought to be, more prestigious high school. Putney was an afterthought and I agreed to tour the campus if only to prove to myself and to my parents that Putney was not the place for me. I was shocked by what I saw—kids hugging each other, hair and clothes that I had always been curious about (but could get you beat up in the eighth grade), even students and faculty who looked happy to be there. Putney was the place for me and I can't imagine what my life would be like if I had made any other choice.

My orientation trip thoroughly prepared me for four years at Putney: walking uphill at a brutal angle with an immense weight tied to my back while the accompanying faculty members sat at the top of the mountain eating bagels and yelling, "You can do it!" But when I got to the top, I'll be damned if that bagel wasn't the best thing I ever tasted.

Work Day was the next ordeal and though I went in grumbling (Work? This is a school!), I came out with a healthy respect for the environment and a, dare I say, spiritual awakening. Dare I say it? Is that okay? I was invigorated and inspired by the unique approach to education. The classes revolved around discussion, questioning and trying to reach a deeper understanding of the material. That's the way I like it—less note taking, more arguing.

It didn't take long for me to get used to life at Putney. I started to let the façade down and for the first time among my peers, I felt comfortable in my own skin. As you can see, my skin has only gotten more comfortable over the years. I fit in and basked in the compassionate glow. I can think of few high schools in which teachers and students forge such strong relationships. And the same goes for schools in which an open mind is your path to enlightenment, not a point of contention. It is the warm, understanding and selfless

Putney community that has shaped me into what I am today. You know what they say—it takes a village to raise a Mackler.

You know who you are. You showed me how to peel a cantaloupe, grill a steak and always encouraged me to give it a dash of curry. You called off tennis practice to talk me through the hardest times and stuck by me while I figured myself out. You put things in perspective and cracked up at every *Simpsons* quote. You inspired me to push the boundaries of creativity and performance to create dramatic work that I could truly be proud of. You pushed me to stay on the beat, regardless of the bass drum, in more ways than one and were always there for me with a hug and a smile. You listened to my problems and made me realize how normal they really were, dismissing my supposed psychosis with a chuckle and a roll of the eyes. A lot of you taught me new ways to learn and experience life. You made me a better person and acted like it was nothing. You took me to shows and reveled in our similarities, with a gentle understanding

and smart advice. You apologized for your apartment, then brewed herbal tea and discussed world music. You snuck me leftover muffins and always had time when I needed to talk. You were so enthused at my rediscovery of Thursday morning Sing that you exclaimed, “Meester Mackler!” when you saw me on a bench—and saw me anywhere else, for that matter. You supplied candy and encouragement—a lot of you supplied candy and encouragement—and that ego boost that got me through many a stressed-out afternoon. You bummed my new album and were heard to remark, “This s—t is hot!” When I was at the end of my rope, you helped me through battles that I couldn’t control, restoring my faith and helping me see. And you drove me home after that first Work Day, starting a friendship that has lasted four long years.

You are the people who make Putney a beautiful place, and you will stay with me long after today and for the rest of my life—in my memory and in my heart. *Thank you.* 🐼

School of the
Museum of Fine Arts (2)
SUNY Purchase
Sweet Briar College
Tufts University
University of Edinburgh
University of Oregon,
Clark Honors College
Warren Wilson College
Wellesley College
Willamette College (2)

As for the rest, four international students will apply to college next year (one will apply to art school after his year of national service in Germany; one will take her baccalaureat and apply to art school in France; two others will apply to college in Japan); one decided to defer matriculation to U.C. Santa Cruz—which means reapplying next year; two decided to reject all admission offers and apply again next year when there is more time to give to the process; a third decided to wait until next year to apply to college—again because she will have more time to investigate her options. Ten students have arranged to defer matriculation for a year.

Senior Exhibitions 2003

Senior Exhibitions are an opportunity for seniors to design and complete a two-month independent project, ideally interdisciplinary, culminating in a body of work that will be exhibited. Students are expected to create a project that draws upon the breadth of their educational experience at Putney. There is a final presentation to the school community at the end of the semester. At these presentations, there are outside evaluators who are practitioners in the field or fields of the exhibition who, with faculty sponsors, grant or deny credit. Senior Exhibitions encourage students to show mastery through independent learning across the curriculum. Here is just a snapshot of this year’s Senior Exhibitions:

Tish Abelow • Short Stories/Photography	Mesha Maren-Hogan • The Art of the Short Story
Camilla Alexander • Rhythmic Clothing	Leah McGowan • Home is Where the Heart Is
Matt Bachler • Natural Dyeing & Sustainable Agriculture	Lia Sanders • Elements of Earth & Sky
Abbie Claflin • Portrait Painting & Poetic Monologue	Rayla Shawanda • Edibles and Art
Caitlin Cohen • The Black & White Book	James Tarmy • Reading/Writing Plays
Wesley Creigh • Reptile Amphibian Survey	Alia Trindle • El Traje de Luces
Joe Ellis • Mud Music	Kelsey Van Beever • A Study of Birds Through Painting and Etching
Teresa Engst • Recycled & Natural Fibers	Francesca Vitale • Exploration of Buddhism Through Tapestry
Claire Greene • Crucifixion in Art	Victoria Voight • Variations on the Human Body
Sachiko Kayama • Advertisement of Beauty	Raimund Voigt • Designing and Building Set Models for Don Giovanni
Melissa Leo • Medicinal Plants from A to Z	
Dora Levinson • History of the French Horn	